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Understanding Institutional Change – A Gender Perspective E-Newsletter, Issue 7, July 2016

Welcome to our summer newsletter. This issue gives you an idea of some of our activities over the last six months and of some of our future plans and events now that we are in the final 12 months of the project, trying to complete our data collection and analysis and plan our final conference. Further details of the Call for Papers for our conference are below and have been circulated on social media, please publicise widely in your own networks.

We wish you a pleasant summer break!

Work Package 5 Reflections

Faith Armitage, July 2016

My research on Work Package 5, which deals particularly with the notion of informal institutions, is now drawing to a close. I have been focusing on two informal institutions in the legislative arena: MPs' expenses and disruption. The House of Commons at



Westminster and the National Assembly for the Republic of South Africa in Cape Town have provided the case study material for the research, and I completed my second field trip to Cape Town in February 2016, whilst fieldwork at Westminster has been ongoing throughout.

Since returning from maternity leave in July 2015, I have been focusing on legislative disruption (with colleagues Georgina Waylen and Ros Southern taking forward the MPs' expenses theme). This is an under-researched area for legislative studies in general, and research adopting a feminist, gendered or explicitly institutionalist perspective is limited. My research has involved the collection and analysis of new empirical evidence about MPs' behaviour in their main debating chambers, and I am using this data to inform my theoretical reflections on the wider debates amongst feminist and historical institutionalists about the nature and role of formal and informal political institutions.

In previously published research (Armitage, 2013), I presented an analytical distinction between tolerated and non-tolerated disorder, where only the latter leads to formal sanctions levied by the Speaker. In my current research, I have re-labelled these 'everyday disruption' and 'protest disruption', and zeroed in on the questions that the recent institutionalist debates have raised around the effort to

better theorise informal institutions, including: how are formal and informal institutions defined and distinguished? How do they interact? How do they constrain and enable actors? How are they enforced?



Formally-sanctioned 'protest disruption' is extremely rare in the House of Commons. It is behaviour monopolised by male MPs, and mainly by a handful of individual 'repeat offenders'. Protest disruption is far more commonplace in the National Assembly, particularly since 2014 General Election, when 25 MPs from the Economic Freedom Fighters Party joined the 400-strong assembly. Although male MPs appear to engage in and be formally punished for protest disruption more frequently than female MPs, it is far from the exclusively

male preserve that it is in Westminster.

Although protest disruption attracts newspaper headlines because of its sensationalist nature, for the purposes of this Work Package, it is the subtler phenomenon of 'everyday disruption' that is more relevant. To put it in layperson's terms, 'everyday disruption' is the lower-level 'rowdy' behaviour adopted by MPs from time to time during plenary or main chamber debates, which *does* violate the formal rules of order – particularly rules around turn-taking and the respect and courtesy MPs are meant to show each other and the chair – but is basically tolerated by the chair. Although my data collection and analysis are as yet incomplete, the evidence gathered reveals some gender differences. For instance, male MPs appear to be significantly more likely to 'stick their necks out' with loud heckling during a momentary lull in the ambient chamber noise than their female colleagues. Additionally, in interviews, male MPs tend to valorise or glorify heckling, whereas female MPs do not.

In a forthcoming working paper, I argue that the imperfect enforcement of the formal rules by chairs is not a weakness or fault of the individual or indeed of the formal rules. Rather, it is a consciously and strategically *selective* enforcement of formal rules that are not always regarded by chairs (male and female) or the masculine majorities present in the two assemblies as fit for purpose. That selective enforcement is a key enabling factor or mechanism which *produces* the informal institution of everyday disruption. Following Kellee Tsai, the argument that I am developing suggests that everyday disruption can be regarded as an 'adaptive informal institution', which represents a 'creative response to [a] formal institutional environment' that (some) actors find too constraining (2006). To oversimplify my case studies, everyday disruption can be characterised as a 'creative' response to a set of formal rules that some men but few women find too constraining.

References

- Faith Armitage (2013): Peace and quiet in the British House of Commons, 1990–2010, *Democratization*, 20:3, 456-477.
- Kellee Tsai (2006): Adaptive Informal Institutions and Endogenous Institutional Change in China, *World Politics*, 59:1, 116-141.

Book Launch: Gender Institutions and Change in Bachelet's Chile

27th May 2016

Report by Carmen Sepúlveda-Zelaya



At the end of May we had the opportunity to launch the book [Gender, Institutions, and Change in Bachelet's Chile](#), edited by Georgina Waylen and published by Palgrave in February 2016, during the 50th anniversary and XXXIV International Conference of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) in New York. Over 6000 delegates attended the conference. We were lucky that many of the authors who contributed to the book – including Silke Staab, Gwynn Thomas, Peter Siavelis, Jasmine Gideon, Carmen Sepúlveda-Zelaya, as well as the editor for this Palgrave books' series Maxine Molyneux – were able to gather at the Palgrave book stand and launch the book. The authors shared the main findings of the book and talked about their experience contributing to the monograph with fellow scholars interested in gender, institutions and politics in the region. The Palgrave stand was located in the vibrant editors' exhibition space within the conference hotel, which meant the book was very visible, and we all received good feedback regarding how welcome and timely its contents were.

Conference and Workshop Presentations

- Many of team presented a panel at the Political Studies Association Conference in Brighton, which took place between 21st-23rd March, entitled 'Gender and Political Institutions: Rules, Actors and Contexts', paper titles were as follows:
Faith Armitage, 'Gender, parliamentary disruption and rules: evidence from the UK and South Africa'
Leah Culhane, 'Male over-representation, intra-party democracy and institutional change: evidence from the Republic of Ireland'
Francesca Gains and Vivien Lowndes, 'How are political institutions gendered? Exploring the relationship between actors, rules and contexts'
Georgina Waylen and Ros Southern, 'Gendering the UK Parliamentary expenses scandal and its aftermath'
- Leah Culhane attended a Men, Masculinities and Politics workshop at the University of Bristol on 3rd February and presented a paper entitled 'Maintaining Male Dominance – Informal Institutions and Political Recruitment in the Republic of Ireland'.
- Georgina Waylen and Ros Southern presented a paper entitled 'Gender, Informal Institutions and Corruption: The UK Parliamentary Expenses Scandal' at the Gender and Corruption workshop which took place between 23rd-24th May in Gothenburg, Sweden.
- Carmen Sepulveda presented two papers, the first at SLAS on 7th April 2016 at the University of Liverpool entitled, 'Institutions and Gender Policies in Michelle Bachelet's Second Administration' and the second, entitled 'Institutions and the Gender Agenda of the Second Bachelet Presidency', at the Latin American Studies Association Congress in New York which took place between 27-30th May 2016



Rethinking Gender, Institutions, and Change in Workshop

20-21st June 2016, Elizabeth Gaskell House, Manchester

On 20-21st June the project held its fifth workshop entitled 'Rethinking Gender, Institutions and Change'. The workshop was held at the Grade II listed Elizabeth Gaskell house (where she wrote *North and South* as well as many of her other novels) and brought together a small number of feminist academics from North America, Europe and the UK to reflect on the theoretical frameworks that we have been using on the project to date, as well as new approaches that might be helpful for the future development of the gendered analysis of institutional change and feminist institutionalism. All the sessions took the form of roundtables that spanned the roles of actors, strategies as well as changing institutional mechanisms and future research agendas.

As well as the lively academic discussions the attendees enjoyed a very informative tour of the Elizabeth Gaskell's house by the Chair of Trustees and a drinks reception in the beautiful foyer, followed by dinner at Jamie's Italian in Manchester.

Call for Papers!

Our final project conference 'Gender, Institutions and Change: Feminist Institutionalism after 10 years' will take place on 3rd-4th April 2017. We would welcome paper proposals on any aspect of the study of gender, institutions, institutional change and feminist institutionalism. The deadline for abstracts to be submitted is 1st September 2016. Please see our [conference website](#) for further details.

